

Iain Lawson Cubicle Seven



The names of the game and its setting are steeped in fantasy, myth and history. The original world of Promothea is named after the legendary Prometheus. Promothea is also the setting for a series of comic books by Alan Moore and a movement dedicated to the furthering of human life through true freedom. The name of the system, Dark Harvest, is also that of an award winning scary Halloween tale by Norman Partridge, a slasher movie from 2004, an App for the iPhone and a Metal Music Recording Label.

Iain's Promothea is in Mary Shelley-Land settling nicely between the Carpathian Mountains and Transylvania. Whether or not any of the above inspired Iain's choices I know not, but they do put this game amongst some great company.

The first 115 pages of this soft-cover volume feature several short stories that open up the world of Frankenstein's Promothea to the uninformed. Amongst these stories are some great observations by Magz Wiseman and Andrew Harman as well as the basic background from Iain. What a world Victor Frankenstein has carved out (literally *carved*) for himself, it certainly isn't one you'd like to live in and more so not one you'd want to die in - the word *Harvest* isn't in the title accidentally and there aren't many cornfields in the region.

This is a raw, dark, bleak alternative 19th & 20th Century Central Europe with a black heart. Frankenstein, under an assumed name, hijacks the Balkans by political skulduggery and creates Promothea. He then sets about creating a Utopia of science, technology and harmony.

After the background come the rules, and the Character Creation, which along with the combat mechanic are often the points that determine an rpg's favour with players. As Dark Harvest is compatible with Cubicle 7's Core Rule Book "Victoriana" it isn't that surprising to learn that these rules are an adaption of the Cubicle 7 Entertainment's *Heresy* game engine. I, personally, always like to look at the mechanics for combat and skills, but determine whether I want to play by my interest in the subject matter and the background.

In DARK HARVEST when characters attempt to perform an action that isn't considered a normal everyday action - like walking, going up or down stairs etc. - they make a die roll. The dice used are all D6 and rolls of 1s and 6s are successes; only one success is required to succeed at the task, though the more successes rolled the better the action is performed.

Sometimes the GM will decide that the task has a difficulty not reflected in the number of dice a character's skill or ability allows them to roll (the number of dice rolled is one for each point of skill or ability being tested) and in these cases the GM assigns a number of Black Dice (they can be any colour as long as they are different from the regular dice) and any result of a 1 or a 6 on a Black die negates a success on a normal die. Thus although the game does have a fair few die rolls each session the actions are swiftly determined as success or failure and the adventure moves on.

There are times when the GM and the players can get into some light-hearted banter when it comes to performing actions. If the players think the GM is being unfair or the GM thinks the player is taking a liberty then they can work out a deal between them to difficulty and which skills and/or attributes can be brought into play. Combat runs along a similar mechanic as explained but with successful hits also counting as damage, along with the successes rolled for the damage caused by using a weapon.

The creatures of prometean are in general the basic woodland critters you would expect - cattle, bears, wolves, pine marten etc. Thankfully Frankenstein's experiments have left seepage into the ground and water affect some of these critters so GMs can have some real fun with *augmented* versions of small furry animals (and even larger furry animals) oh what joy! Talking of creatures, Frankenstein is haunted and hunted by The Creature and the Resistance.

While the GM can have fun with the players, they can have some fun with their characters languages - Romanian, German, Hungarian, Russian and Romani, also slipping into French and English.

This is a game of thoughtful consideration where imagination and cooperation are the tools that both set and explore the adventure. It is a work of art where coloured pages have been forgone to ensure no detail has been overlooked or omitted.

Dissecting DARK HARVEST is like the dissecting Frankenstein's Legacy has left in Promothea; when you take away the good bits and all other parts you want to use there is very little left over to be picky about.